LABOUR MONTHLY

EDITOR R. PALME DUTT

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BOOK REVIEW

FUTURE OF BRITISH POLITICS

6D

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THANK YOU, SUBSCRIBERS . . .

For the first time for many months we have reached the needed £100 in our Guarantee Fund, which is an occasion of great rejoicing in the L.M. office, and we go to Press with our minds at rest, financially. Naturally, we were interested to see in just what direction the increase over last month could be accounted for, and the answer was found to be: RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS. A very large proportion of people whose subscriptions expired during the past month sent us "a bit extra for the Fund." Look down the list and see how many amounts of 3s. and 13s. there are: "the change out of 10s. or £1," after deducting 7s. for the subscription.

We urge all subscribers to be very open-handed in renewing their subscriptions and send us that bit extra (not of course restricting it to 3s. or 13s., because we have a lot of leeway to make up) which individually is not much, but which, when added together, makes all the difference to our magazine.

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

After Three Months—Prime Minister's Statement—Politics After Teheran—New Alignments — United States — Jugoslavia — Czechoslovakia and France — Britain's Special Problem—Basis of National Unity—Revolt against Tory Reaction—Coalition Indispensable—Final Battles against Fascism— Threats to Teheran—Enemy Intrigues—Plain Conclusions—By-Elections Question—Practical Solution—Future General Election—Ending Tory Domination—Electoral Reform Tory-Labour Hostility—Mythical Arguments—Hard Facts—Two Party System—Twenty Eight Years of Coalition—Mr. Greenwood's Fiat— Suicidal Narrowness—Against Division of the Left—Practical Way Forward—War Urgency.

WE are now entering the third month of 1944. Three months have passed since Teheran. Four months have passed since the Moscow Agreements. How far has fulfilment gone forward? Can we be satisfied that all that is required to be done is being done? Or are there signs of opposition in certain quarters? Is the Government giving adequate leadership to the nation, corresponding to the new agreements and the new tasks? Is the tempo of military and productive preparedness adequate? How far is Allied policy in Europe making progress in fulfilling the decisions? Or policy on the home front? Or policy for post-war preparedness? Does the political situation in Britain and the United States since Teheran correspond to the new requirements? These are vital questions which require to be frankly faced. The Teheran and Moscow Agreements have placed the greatest opportunities of our lifetime in the hands of the peoples of the world. But their fulfilment is not automatic. It is necessary to fight for their fulfilment. The decision of this issue turns above all on the political situation in Britain and the United States, both now and after the war.

THE Prime Minister's statement on the war to Parliament, originally delayed through his illness after Teheran, and now promised for February 22, is long overdue. These lines have to be written and passed for press before the statement; and it would be out of place to attempt to prejudge its contents. It is therefore only possible to survey in advance, and in broadest outline, some of the urgent problems which are now arising, and in relation to which the Premier's statement should throw some light on the attitude of the Government. During these three to four months since Moscow and Teheran there has been no major statement of Government policy to awaken public opinion to a full understanding of the significance of the decisions and mobilise the nation for their fulfilment. There has been no call to the nation corresponding to President Roosevelt's Message to Congress, which followed soon after his return from Teheran in the beginning of January. These critical months of preparation for the final offensive, which should have seen the highest level of unity, confidence and enthusiasm, have seen instead a certain confusion of public opinion, tendencies to political disorientation, and a weakening of the relations between the Government and the electorate, which should give rise to serious concern.

WHAT is the position? The agreements and decisions, military and political, reached during the conferences at the end of last year between the representatives

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of the three strongest World Powers, the decisive centres of power after the elimination of Fascism, open a new perspective, not only for immediate action, but for many years ahead. They transform the situation and prospect for every country in the world. They require a corresponding political alignment in every country to ensure their fulfilment. They have given plain marching orders for the year before us. The aim is set for victory in Europe in 1944; that aim is equally proclaimed by General Eisenhower as by the Soviet leaders; the scope and timing of military action is agreed. The aim is not only set for military victory, but for the complete destruction of Fascism. In the words of Molotov before the Supreme Soviet on February 1, in front of the Ambassadors of the United Nations:—

> We cannot end the war with the military defeat of Germany alone. It must end with the moral and political annihilation of Fascism.

If this note were sounded more often by Government Ministers in this country, it would arouse more enthusiasm than can be expected from the release of Mosley and six hundred Fascists on the eve of the final battle against Fascism.

MORE. The new agreements reach out beyond the war. They reach out, in their own words, "for many generations." They hold out for the first time firm foundations for the maintenance of world peace and the collaboration of nations over a prolonged period—provided the partnership of Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States is maintained. They set out the conception of "a world - family of democratic nations." They lay down the first beginnings of that world organisation which is already imperatively necessary at the present stage of world development, if fatal collisions and suicidal conflict are to be avoided, but which has at the present stage to be achieved in spite of the temporary divergence of social and political systems. It is obvious that the successful achievement of these aims means the most favourable conditions for the advance of democracy, the strengthening of the working class and the whole path of advance to socialism. It is no less obvious that the task of the successful fulfilment of these aims requires a corresponding firm political basis of democratic anti-Fascist co-operation within each country to ensure such fulfilment.

WHAT must be the character of such a political basis within each country, capable of ensuring the fulfilment of the aims expressed in the Teheran programme, and of advancing the interests of the people, economic, social and political, inside each country, within the general framework of the international perspective opened up by Teheran? This is the crucial question of the internal political situation of each country, great or small, of the United Nations, following Teheran. It is in the light of this general perspective that the various problems and controversies of the inner political situation of each country, both in the present culminating phase of the struggle for victory over Fascism, and in the further phase following and arising out of victory, and offering immeasurable opportunities of advance for the people, given correct political leadership, must be judged.

THE answer to this question will vary with the concrete conditions in each country. It will obviously not be the same in a country like the United States and in a country like Jugoslavia. In the United States, the dominant and strongest centre of world capitalism, where there is not yet any mass political labour movement, the alignment for Teheran must necessarily take place within the old political forms, under the leadership of

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those progressive elements of monopoly capital represented by the leadership of Roosevelt. Powerful big business interests, most strongly entrenched within the Republican Party, but also strongly entrenched in important sections of the Democratic Party, with greater or less degree of openness oppose the Teheran line, resist the Second Front in Europe, crab the prospects of military victory, proclaim hostility to the Soviet Union, to the democratic anti-Fascist victory of the peoples in Europe, or to the conception of collective security, and thus prepare the way for World War III for counter-revolutionary aims of American world domination. Against these, other powerful business and financial interests, not out of altruism, but with a more far-sighted understanding of world forces, recognise the strength of the Soviet Union, the danger to world capitalism of World War III and the necessity of world peace, and support the general programme of Teheran for victory over the Axis and for a future policy of international collaboration. The interests of the American working class and all popular democratic sections, not yet strong enough to exercise independent political leadership, require the exertion of the utmost effort to promote the victory of the latter camp, represented by Roosevelt, against the former; in striving for this immediate objective, they build up their own strength; this policy corresponds to the interests of the American working class and people, and to the eventual path of advance to the victory of Socialism in the United States.

ON the other hand, in the European countries, which have been overrun by Nazism, where the Nazi conquerors and their Quislings have usurped the machinery of State, and where the majority, or a great part of the bourgeoisie, have passed over to collaboration with the Nazi enemy, the national front necessarily takes a very different form, and finds its principal expression in the underground movements of resistance, with the working class playing the foremost role. In Jugoslavia the National Defence Council, recognised by the Allies, with Marshal Tito at its head, with the Communist Party active in the forefront, rallies all sections of the people in armed resistance against the Nazis and their Quislings, and in sharp opposition to the traitor elements of the bourgeoisie represented by Mihaelovitch. In Czechoslovakia, with the united anti-Nazi sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the nation, although at a less highly developed stage of the resistance movement, with the very limited support of the Quislings represented by Hacha and Tiso, with the far closer integration of the *emigre* Government with the national movement, and with the Czech-Soviet Treaty, the national front again takes on distinctive forms. The character and programme of the Czechoslovak National Front, explained in the speech of President Benes to the State Council on February 3, is of exceptional importance and wide significance for the future of Europe; and the attention of readers is called to the excerpts from President Benes' speech which appear in this number. In France the national resistance movement grows in strength and authority, with the active role of the French Communist Party, now recognised on all sides as the strongest political force of the national front inside France, and finds its reflection in the Consultative Assembly in Algiers, exercising its influence on the National Committee under the leadership of De Gaulle.

WHAT of Britain? The situation in Britain is a distinctive situation, and differs in very important respects from that either of the United States or of the Continental European countries. Unlike the United States, there is in Britain a powerfully

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developed mass political labour movement, the strongest at present in the capitalist world, constituting one of the two major governing parties, and aspiring to full political leadership of the country. Unlike the European countries overrun by Nazism, Britain remains a powerful independent imperialist State, second only to the United States; Toryism, or the party of big capital, holds the dominant political position in the Government; despite the existence of strong Munichite sections, the bourgeoisie has not passed over to collaboration with Nazism; on the contrary, the dominant monopoly capitalist forces, under the leadership of Churchill, have recognised their interest in the alliance with the Soviet Union and the United States for the defeat of Nazi Germany, and have recognised this, not only as a temporary military alliance, but as the starting-point for a long-term policy for the future, corresponding to the requirements of Britain's changed position in the world, and finding expression in the Twenty-Year British-Soviet Treaty and in the Teheran programme.

HEREIN lies an immediate coincidence of interest, between the monopoly capitalist sections led by Churchill and the British working class, for the defeat of Nazi Germany, for the British-Soviet Treaty and the alliance of the United Nations, and for the aims of the Teheran programme. This immediate coincidence of interest provides the basis for present co-operation in the war, for national unity and the Coalition Government. But this does not mean that the problem of national unity is permanently solved in Britain on the basis of the existing forms; that there is not room and need for strengthening national unity in the present struggle and eliminating many weaknesses; and that there is not room and need for changes in the balance of forces within national unity. Still less does it exclude future changes which may be necessary as the issues develop.

THE existence of a powerfully developed political labour movement in Britain, with the avowed aim of independent political leadership and the socialist transformation of society, is the expression of the consciousness of deep internal divisions in the social structure in Britain, and of the ripeness of conditions for far-reaching social and economic changes. The desire for these changes finds expression in the growing mass revolt against the domination of Toryism, even at the same time as Labour is in alliance with Toryism, and necessarily in alliance with Toryism, for victory over Fascism. The existing domination of Toryism in the political machinery, as expressed in the composition of Parliament and the consequent composition of the Government, reflects the results of an election nine years old, in which no one at present below the age of thirty had any part. Since then, especially through the experience of the war, a far-reaching movement of opinion to the left has taken place, which finds no corresponding reflection in the composition of Parliament and the Government. These issues already become sharp even during the war, and find their expression in questions of war policy, home mobilisation and post-war policy. They will obviously become very much sharper at the close of the war, when far-reaching social and economic measures of advance will need to be carried through, making inroads into the domination of monopoly. Herein lies the heart of the problem of the political situation in Britain to combine the national unity which is essential for victory over Fascism with the necessary changes in the balance of forces within national unity; and to prepare the future alignment of forces after the war which will carry forward the essential unity of the nation in support of the programme of

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Teheran, while giving full scope for the changes which will correspond to the outlook and wishes of the majority of the people.

WHAT must be the answer to this problem? From some quarters on the left the proposal is put forward that the Coalition should now be broken up, and that Labour should come out into opposition to the Government. It is impossible to support this proposal, if any serious view is taken of the present stage and requirements of the war, now approaching its highest intensity, and of the military obligations falling on the entire nation, whose fulfilment will require unbreakable unity, irrespective of political opinions, and whose successful fulfilment is the condition of fulfilment of all the other aims of Teheran. The unity of all sections of the nation is not less, but more essential than ever now in the present culminating phase of the battle against Fascism. The organised expression of such national unity in the political field, in the field of Government, is the co-operation of the main parties, representing the different sections of the people, that is, political coalition.

IT is sometimes argued that, while coalition may have been necessary in previous more urgent stages of the war, it is now no longer necessary, since the war may be regarded as won. This is completely to under-estimate the serious character of the battles in front, which will require the most united determination and war effort, with far more exacting demands than any previous stage of the war. It is also to under-estimate the serious danger represented by reactionary opposition elements who work to undermine Teheran, who are opposed to decisive victory over Fascism, who seek to spread military defeatist moods and doubts in such a way as to discourage fulfilment of the pledged offensive in the West, who seek to exploit temporary diplomatic and military difficulties in such a way as to endeavour to discredit Teheran and cast doubts on the unity of the alliance, and thus work to delay the Second Front and spread that disruption which is the last remaining hope of Nazism.

IS there opposition to Teheran in this country? Only the blind could fail to see it because it is veiled under the cloak of a general formal acceptance, sometimes very lukewarm acceptance. It may not be so open and blatant here as in the United States, but in action it is unmistakable. It is impossible to fail to note the significance of the fact that precisely those quarters which were previously most outspoken in opposition to the Second Front, and on that basis took on themselves the role of universal defenders of the military command against all critics, now come out as the most censorious critics of the military command on the basis of the critical phases of the bridgehead battle in Italy, and draw therefrom conclusions to point to the overwhelming military strength of the enemy and the necessity of revision of time-tables for any future offensive.

IT is equally impossible to fail to note the significance of the way in which certain reactionary quarters, including from within the labour movement, have sought to exploit the difficulties arising from the pro-Fascist disruptive activities of Polish reactionaries who are more concerned to fight the Soviet Union than Hitler, and seek to make these difficulties an excuse for anti-Soviet propaganda and for proclaiming the bankruptcy of Teheran. When the *New York Times* declares that "the time has come to ask the Russians whether the Moscow agreements still stand"; when the *Observer* announces that, if the demands of the Polish reactionaries are not met,

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then "the Declarations of Moscow and Teheran are torn up"; when the *Daily Herald* laments that "recent events have provided Dr. Goebbels with rich inspiration to prove that Teheran, though a military success, fell far short of expectation as a political occasion"; and when the *Labour Woman*, after accusing the Soviet Union of "power-politics, naked and unashamed," proclaims that "the high hopes raised by the agreements at Moscow and Teheran have been shaken," it is evident that we have here a common line which is certainly far less interested in Poland than in using any stick as an excuse in order to proclaim aloud the bankruptcy of Teheran before its fulfilment has hardly begun. To counteract these undermining intrigues, it is the more necessary to strengthen the unity of all responsible elements supporting Teheran, and to strengthen the Government on the basis of the official line of support of Teheran, for the fulfilment of the Teheran agreements in the present culminating phase of the war.

THEREFORE the Churchill Coalition Government has still an indispensable role to fulfil in the present stage, despite all the difficulties associated with its composition, with many unsatisfactory phases of its policy, and with the consequent dangerous divergences revealed between it and the present movement of public opinion. Neither Toryism nor Labour in isolation at the present stage, under present conditions, would be capable of carrying the entire nation, as the Churchill Coalition Government is able to do, for the necessary war policies and supreme war effort involved in the fulfilment of Teheran. Indeed, it might almost be said that it is fortunate that a Conservative Prime Minister and a Conservative Foreign Secretary signed the agreements of Teheran and Moscow; for, had they been regarded as the sole responsibility of Labour, there might well have been an outcry from Tory ranks exceeding the present outcry from Republican ranks in the United States, and with even more dangerous consequences. Hence it is essential that any proposal on the present political situation must be such as would not weaken, but rather strengthen national unity and support of the Churchill Coalition Government for victory over Fascism, and for fulfilment of the military and political agreements of Teheran for such victory.

BUT at the same time this does not mean that the present Coalition Government can be regarded in its composition as an adequate expression of national unity or the most effective instrument for the fulfilment of Teheran. For the present composition is based on a stereotyped reproduction of the relations of parties nine years ago, in the election of 1935, at a very different stage, less and less corresponding to the outlook of the nation today. And the present method of operating the electoral truce is devised to freeze this obsolete relation of parties, not only in the Government, but in parliamentary representation and in the constituencies, without leaving any scope for democratic participation and change. Hence arise the daily more acute problems which now break with irresistible force on the political scene. For political development cannot, in fact, be frozen in this way, least of all in the forcing-house conditions of wartime.

THE attempt artificially to stereotype the relations of an obsolete *status quo*, and prevent democratic change, is not only undemocratic and a disservice to national unity. It also weakens the effectiveness of the Government as a war instrument. For the consequence inevitably means that precisely those elements are most heavily represented which

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were dominant nine years ago and are now discredited, and which are most unsuited, by their whole record and outlook and policy, for waging war against Fascism, maintaining friendship with the Soviet Union or giving effect to the aims of Teheran. This is at the root of all the weaknesses and contradictions of Government policy today. To change this situation requires, in the first place, a very much more active positive role of the labour movement, so as to increase its weight and influence in the Government and in the policy of the Government; and it requires, further, the democratic reinvigoration of the composition of Parliament and of the Government. It is here that arises the present importance of the question of by-elections.

HOW is the essential maintenance of national unity for the war to be combined with this essential democratic reinvigoration of the composition of Parliament and the Government? This is the immediate problem of the present political situation. The traditional method, in the existing constitutional machinery of this country, for invigorating the composition of a Parliament or a Government during its term of office, for bringing in fresh blood and enabling the will of the electorate to administer salutary warnings and influence policy, is through by-elections. But this method has been choked and clogged by the form of operation of the electoral truce hitherto prevailing. The attempt to freeze the *status quo* by treating constituencies as the property of the party in possession, on the basis of an electoral choice of nine years ago, means that the electors are allowed no say in the selection of the representative whom they are solemnly instructed to return in the name of national unity. This is the system which has produced the present revolt. If the electors wish to exercise a choice of their own, they can under these conditions only do so by returning a candidate outside the parties supporting national unity. They may wish to return a member of another of the major parties supporting national unity, but this freedom of choice is denied them under the existing system. The height of absurdity is reached when members of the major parties, wishing to contest under these conditions, find themselves in consequence compelled to divest themselves of their party affiliations and appear as temporary "Independents." The electors, nine-tenths of whom may wish to support the Government and national unity for victory, are only able to exercise their rightful freedom of choice of representative by appearing to come out in opposition to the Government and national unity, with consequences endangering the basis of the Government and national unity. Thus a system, originally devised to maintain national unity, has become in practice a menace to national unity.

IT is obvious that this harmful method of operating by-elections under present conditions must be altered, and that a common solution must be found by agreement of the parties supporting national unity. If the proposal put forward by the Communist Party during these past two years to meet the dilemma, by joint selection conferences in the constituency to choose the candidate of national unity, is not accepted, then it is better that there should be recognised freedom to contest in by-elections, on the part of the parties supporting the Government and national unity, without disruption of the Coalition Government, so that the electors may be free to choose, within the framework of national unity and agreed support of the Government, the representative of that tendency which they wish to see strengthened within the camp of national unity and within the Government.

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BROADER issues have to be faced in relation to the conditions of the future general election which is due to follow the ending of the war in Europe, or may even precede it. It is not possible to prejudge the concrete conditions of such an election. But it is clear that such an election would be meaningless if it did not give the opportunity of a free and unfettered democratic choice and renewal of Parliament. The essential continuity of policy for the aims of Teheran will require the return of a stable democratic anti-Fascist majority supporting those aims. But the aims of Teheran cannot be separated from the urgent needs of social change and advance in Britain, making inroads into the strongholds of monopoly and vested interests, which are politically represented by Tory reaction. The task of the elimination of the old domination of Tory reaction in Parliament, which does not correspond to the outlook of the majority of the people, has to be accomplished in this coming election. This will require the return of a strong and united Labour and progressive majority in Parliament which will be capable of ensuring a Government combining active support and fulfilment of the Teheran programme with a far-reaching social programme in Britain.

IT should not be assumed that this task will be an easy one. The calculation that, with the existing disunited labour movement, with division in the camp of the supporters of Socialism, with division of all the progressive forces opposed to Toryism, nevertheless Toryism will be defeated and the sweep of opinion will ensure the automatic return of an absolute Labour majority, is a hazardous one, and not responsible political leadership. Through the greater part of the modern period there has been a more or less continuous fairly stable majority of Labour and progressive voters with Toryism in the minority in the electorate; but the division of the Left, under the existing electoral system, has ensured a Tory majority over the greater part of the period. It is here that arises the importance of the question of democratic electoral reform, or proportional representation, in the present political situation. This question has passed from being a general question of democratic reform, a hardy perennial of reformers, and has become a burning political issue. The official policy of the labour movement has hitherto opposed any major democratic electoral reform, such as would make Parliament representative of the electorate, on highly dubious grounds of supposed sectional advantage to be gained from an undemocratic system. It is now urgently necessary to reconsider this position.

THE arguments with which this opposition to major democratic electoral reform has hitherto been maintained, and is still maintained, as in the recent parliamentary debate, in which Tory and official Labour speakers united in their opposition, are based on misconceptions which bear no relation to the modern political situation. It is argued that the present system, though admittedly an inaccurate representation of the wishes of the electors, has the advantage of giving a small majority in the country an exaggerated majority in Parliament, and thus ensuring a stable Government based on a strong parliamentary majority of the successful party. Unfortunately this picture is mythical in relation to modern conditions. The existing system does not merely give an exaggerated parliamentary majority to the majority of voters in the country; it is equally capable of giving, and has given, on more than one occasion, a parliamentary majority to a minority of votes in the country.

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THUS in 1924 the Conservatives polled a minority in the country (7½ million out of 16 million votes) and obtained two-thirds of the seats; and on this basis the Conservative Government was maintained for five years, from 1924 to 1929, fought the General Strike and passed the Trade Union Act, with a steamroller parliamentary majority representing minority support in the country. The same happened in 1935, when the Conservatives obtained their present crushing parliamentary majority of seats, which they have maintained for nine years, on the basis of a minority of votes in the election. During fourteen of the past twenty years the existing system has thus given a parliamentary majority to an electoral minority. Hence the defenders of the existing system should not waste their breath defending a system which gives an exaggerated majority to a small majority in the country. They must defend a system which gives a parliamentary majority to a minority of votes in the country. We can only wish joy of this task to any who still dare to claim to stand for a shred of democracy.

SIMILARLY it is argued that democratic electoral reform would produce a multiplicity of parties and groups, leading to the necessity of Coalition Government, with all the weaknesses attendant on Coalition Government, based on the negotiations and bargainings of independent political sections. The existing system is thus defended as the best guarantee against Coalition Government, and as ensuring a Government based on the stable majority of a single party. It is declared to be the mainstay of the essential British parliamentary form of the two-party system of the Ins and Outs, as against a multiplicity of parties. Unfortunately, once again this picture is a myth of the constitutional textbooks which bears little relation to modern political realities. The two-party system disappeared with the nineteenth century, with the era of Gladstone and Disraeli and Free Trade. Ironically enough, it was the Labour Party which killed it, and which was roundly abused by the old Liberal Party for killing it and making Parliament unworkable. Under the existing electoral system the former two parties have now become some nine or ten parties and groups in Parliament. In countries with proportional representation the general effect has been to diminish the number of parties and groups. This is not surprising, since the larger constituencies require larger, more strongly based party machines to work them. In fact, the tendency to greater diversity of parties in the modern period of break-up of the old society, reflecting a transitional stage, is due to causes independent of the electoral system, and operating under any.

EQUALLY the tendency to Coalition Governments is characteristic of the modern period, independent of the electoral system. Since 1910 in this country, that is, during the past thirty-four years, there have been twenty-eight years of Coalition Government or Minority Government (i.e., veiled coalition). The only exceptions were the Conservative Governments of 1922 and 1924-29; and in both these cases the Conservative majority in Parliament was based on a minority of votes in the country. Thus in all these thirty-four years there has never been a case of a Government based on the electoral majority of a single Party in the country. Yet the defenders of the existing system still proclaim its virtues on the basis of this myth.

MR. GREENWOOD'S attempt to impose the two-party system on an unwilling electorate by a kind of fiat or decree, insisting that they must fit into Procrustes' bed, irrespec-

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tive of their wishes, for the convenience of Government, is not only highly arbitrary and undemocratic, but also extremely incompetent and unrealist statesmanship. At the present stage—not for all time—the various tendencies of opinion exist, corresponding to varying social conditions. Within the working class movement the tendency represented by Communism exists, based on the main body of the militant workers; and no excommunication of Transport House can remove its existence, or the necessity of a basis of working class unity being found. Beyond the working class movement, the tendency represented by Liberalism exists, based on considerable sections of the small middle-class and professional people. It may be that the tendency expressed by Common Wealth, reflecting sections of the middle-class awakening to the necessity of social change, though not yet ready to merge themselves in the labour movement, will also prove to have a basis of existence for a time. The task of democratic statesmanship, and, above all, of a far-seeing labour statesmanship, is to find the basis of co-operation of all Labour and progressive forces in such a way as to associate the widest sections of the people around the central core and leadership of the organised working class movement.

THIS is the necessary path forward at the present time in place of the narrow monopolist suicidal policy of Transport House, which does not lead to a Labour majority, but only to permanent Labour subordination to Toryism. The counterpart of Greenwood's speech, the inevitable sequel of his argument, is his picture of the permanent Tory-Labour partnership and alternation, the principle of progress and the brake recognised as equally indispensable parts of a single system. The narrow monopolist policy prevents a Labour majority and plays into the hands of Toryism. When all the cards were present to rally and mobilise the majority of the people around the leadership of the labour movement, the narrow monopolist policy thrusts wide sections of potential allies into the hands of Toryism; and it is unfortunately Toryism that has understood to play the tactics of coalition in the modern period since 1931. A basic democratic electoral reform, along the lines of proportional representation, would make easier the task of building up a stable progressive majority of the people around the central leadership of the organised working-class movement.

HOWEVER, although the Speaker's Conference is due to consider the question of proportional representation, there are no grounds for expecting its adoption, so long as the two dominant party machines fear and hate such democratic electoral reform as the devil fears holy water and will do all in their power to prevent it. Therefore it is necessary to tackle the problem of winning a Labour and progressive majority at the coming election within the limitations of the existing electoral system. This can only be accomplished by a firm electoral agreement of all Labour and progressive organisations, with allocation of constituencies, preceding the election, so as to ensure that there is no splitting of the vote against Toryism. This policy, which has been advocated from many quarters, has been put forward in the resolution of the Communist Party Executive Committee, adopted at its meeting on February 20, at the same time as a list was approved of fifty-two candidatures in a series of constituencies. The task of winning such unity is not easy; but the strength of the popular demand for such agreement, and the plain needs of the position, can and must win its achievement. Division of the left would mean the continued domination of Toryism.

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IF, despite the stream of popular opinion against Toryism and towards the left, division of the left organisations were to frustrate the expression of the popular will on the electoral field and leave the victory to the Tories, such an outcome would represent a bankruptcy and a crime which could not be forgiven, and which might lead to dangerous revulsions of wide sections of popular opinion turning away from the left as discredited and turning in despair to any new adventurist current which might be thrown up in the troubled conditions of after the war. On the other hand, the successful establishment of a stable Labour and progressive majority at the next election would provide the conditions for the establishment of a corresponding Government to fulfil Teheran and carry through a programme of decisive social advance in the tasks of reconstruction, and would thus provide the most favourable conditions for the strengthening of the working class movement and its going forward to leadership of the entire nation and to the final victory of Socialism.

ALL this, however, is music of the future. It has been necessary to give some consideration to these questions already now, because they already affect present political alignments and present tasks. But the decisive task today remains that of winning the war against Fascism in 1944. Great issues are in the balance; the present situation is tense and urgent. There are too many dangerous signs of the counter-offensive of those forces which seek to delay and hamper the fulfilment of the Teheran decisions, for it to be possible to relax attention for one moment from the united effort which is essential to ensure prompt fulfilment and to mobilise the strength of the nation behind the offensive. Here is the first field where Labour and democratic unity must reveal itself and build up its strength, in the tasks of the war, in strengthening the Government, in tackling the present problems of production, in all that is necessary for the success of the offensive and for speedy victory over Fascism. Only on this foundation can that unity be built which will be able to approach with confidence the problems of the future.

R. P. D.

February 20, 1944.

The Editor of LABOUR MONTHLY will be very glad to receive contributions in the form of finished articles or of suggestions and data for articles. The customary proviso must be made that no responsibility is undertaken for manuscripts sent to him nor can he promise to enter into correspondence regarding contributions not accepted.

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Czechoslovakia and Europe

Speech to the State Council

by Dr. E. BENES

(In view of the importance of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty and the general statement of policy made by President Benes to the Czechoslovak State Council on February 3, we print below extracts from his speech.—Ed. L.M.)

ON the significance of the Treaty I broadcast from Moscow to our people in Czechoslovakia as follows:—

First of all we shall wage war together with the Soviet Union against Germany and all her helpers until complete victory, and we should carry out together a full, joint military defence against Germany and her associates should Germany in the future renew, as the Treaty expressly puts it, its present criminal policy of the *Drang nach Osten* for the so-called German *Lebensraum*. This brutal policy of Germany must be *completely and definitely crushed* for all time by the present war. This is a clear formulation of the principle that the Soviet Union will never again admit the German *Drang nach Osten* in the future. It is the *first time* that this is clearly and firmly stated and I am convinced that this is a pointer showing the whole of Europe and the whole world that this imperialist, scoundrelly, typically Prussian gangster policy, the policy alike of the former German crusading armies and knights, as well as of the present Junkers, aristocrats, bureaucrats, generals, expansionist capitalists and Pan-German Nazis which has been pursued for many years and, indeed, in a certain sense for whole centuries, that this policy must be finished for ever.

Secondly, in this Treaty we declare jointly the lasting friendship of our nations for the future, a friendship which will be launched immediately after the war by an extensive economic co-operation. We here and you at home are already preparing for this, we should make our plans and take our practical measures! This will mean a considerable transformation in our pre-war commercial and industrial orientation, but it will also mean a great economic assurance for us, a new economic independence especially an independence of Germany and her future influence. It will be necessary to prepare the reconstruction of our rail, water and air communications. This will not mean that we should abandon our connection and economic interests in Western and Southern Europe and the rest of the world. But it will be a great amplification of these, a new guarantee for us, an expression of the fact that we are geographically in the very heart of Europe, in the immediate vicinity and neighbourhood of the Soviet Union, which has so far been economically so neglected by us and which itself has and will have so fundamental an interest in our economic life in the future.

Thirdly, the Treaty expressly describes our future general collaboration as that of two completely free and independent States, it respects our full sovereignty and the fact that each State will refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other; in this we have both wished to show in the most emphatic manner in the eyes of the whole world and against the stupid and boundlessly false propaganda both of the Germans and of our own treacherous Czech and Slovak Quislings—we thus wished to show what was emphasised already at the Moscow Conference of the three Great Powers:

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that these Great Powers and especially the Soviet Union fully respect the independence of smaller nations and States, that it desires a strong Czechoslovakia, a strong Poland, a strong Yugoslavia, and of course also an independent Austria, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland.

Take no heed therefore in our country, in Prague, in the Czech lands and in Slovakia, of that Nazi propaganda agitation which so stupidly declares that the Soviet Union wishes to swallow us up; take no heed of this propaganda even from the point of view of internal policy. Our State, which immediately after this war will set up its political regime in entire freedom through an entirely restricted number of political parties—I myself should personally desire there to be only three—will be a democratic State, truly a people's State, immediately after the fall of Germany it will have its new Government, which will also represent our whole national home front—only Fascists, Nazis and all the treacherous culprits of this war will be excluded from it and from its advantages. These must of course disappear in the abyss of their own catastrophe and must atone for all their errors, guilt and crimes and treachery as will be the case in all the other liberated countries of Europe. Our State will also carry out a number of changes in the economic and social sphere: it will accept for its policy and its economic life the system of planning as certain of our economists endeavoured to do before the present war; I myself expect, and I shall strive for this, that our whole post-war reconstruction, political, economic and social, and especially in the sphere of nationality, in our new State should be carried out very quickly, at least in accordance with a previously prepared programme of a systematic well thought out and scientifically prepared first *Five Year Plan.*

I do not now wish to continue in the enumeration of these questions of domestic policy, we shall speak to the homeland about them in good time both from London and from here and after my return to London our Government will make all the necessary preparations in these matters concerning whose final execution of course our liberated people at home will itself decide in freedom and sovereignty.

And fourthly: this Treaty, with all that is developing from the present war in the co-operation of the Soviet Union with Western Europe, *will prevent once and for all the possibility of a repetition of Munich,** the possibility of a repetition of the treachery of our Fascists, the possibility of a repetition of the treachery of the Slovak Fascists and of their treasonable separation of Slovakia from the Republic in the service of barbarous German violence and it will cause to disappear from our midst for ever German Nazism

*Earlier in his speech Dr. Benes had said:—

"I had always realised that Munich and all the European disasters which followed could come about only because of Western Europe's hostility to the Soviet Union. It was clear to me that if we wished to win the second European war this attitude must be done away with. Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union was made on the assumption that the quarrel between the Russians and the rest of the world was of such a nature that Germany would succeed, whatever happened, in securing some kind of peace with Western Europe as a result of which she would gain a *free hand against the Soviets.* It was clear to me that what would have been nothing less than a world disaster could be averted only by devoted labour in securing a firm and *enduring* understanding between the Anglo-Saxons and the Soviets, and that our chief task was now to work for such an understanding, and that our particular agreement with the Soviets would become self-evident and internationally possible within the limits imposed by the war."

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and base, treacherous Henleinism. That is one of the principal tasks and aims of this Treaty—I say this clearly and openly. In other words: what we are now doing here is *one of the principal guarantees for the existence of a united, national Czechoslovak State of Czechs, Slovaks and of the Carpatho-Ruthenian people for the whole of our future that we can survey.*

I said to you already in August, 1942, after the visit to London of the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, when at that time I informed you of the repudiation of Munich by the British Government through its signature conveyed to Minister Masaryk on August 5, 1942—I told you then that Commissar Molotov had assured me that the Soviet Union had never had anything to do with Munich and would never recognise any of its consequences and that, when signing a Treaty with us on July 18, 1941, concerning a military alliance in the present war against Germany, *he had acknowledged and signed it with the pre-Munich Republic.* This still holds good for both our States today and it holds good in particular for our present treaty. The Soviet Union, moreover, sincerely desires a strong, consolidated Czechoslovak Republic, as nationally homogeneous as possible, which should indeed be a good and strong friend and collaborator of the Soviet nations in the future defence of lasting European peace. It harbours the same desires with regard to the future Poland, and it desires not only a good and friendly relationship towards that country, *but also full Polish-Czechoslovak friendship and collaboration.* All this also arises from the supplementary Protocol to our Treaty which foresees and desires that this Treaty should in the near future become a Tripartite Treaty between the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

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I will conclude this section on the international situation of the Republic by observing once more that from the international standpoint I regard our chief problems as solved, and that thereby the whole line of our post-war foreign policy is today already determined in its main outlines, even though not yet complete in every detail. The foundation of our foreign policy is and will be the geographical position of the Republic in its pre-Munich frontiers. Its corner-stone will be our treaty with the Soviet Union, which will form the basis of our post-war security.

It will be completed by a second essential pillar of post-war European policy, i.e., the British-Soviet Treaty, by which we are automatically bound to a very close and friendly co-operation with Great Britain. I do not wish to find for our co-operation with both these Powers other special formulae; it simply corresponds, not only to our geographical position in Central Europe and to the tradition which we shall derive from this second world war both in relation to the Soviet Union and to Great Britain, but also to our national and economic interests. The fact that in the present war we have fought partly on Soviet soil, and partly on British soil and have been supported by these two States more than by anybody, remains a foundation for the whole of our future policy.

Our third essential task for the days to come will be to bring about, in a spirit of complete friendship with the Poles and the Soviets, that guarantee against a German *Drang nach Osten* which is contemplated by the Soviet-Czechoslovak Pact. This could also be a road for rendering valid those principles which were embodied in the joint Polish-Czechoslovak Declaration of November 11, 1940, and for laying the main foundations for the development of further friendly relations to post-war Poland.

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The fourth foundation of our foreign post-war policy will be the acceptance of the principles of the post-war security system, the basis for which was laid at the Moscow and Teheran Conferences. In this respect we shall accept that which will be agreed upon between the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union and loyally and truly apply it.

We shall work further to aid France in achieving as speedily as possible a complete renaissance and in re-establishing her former position as a great power, so that she may take her former place on the same international footing as Gt. Britain and the Soviet Union; so we may again return to the traditional friendly Franco-Czechoslovak policy. We shall follow the same policy also with regard to Yugoslavia. In this respect we shall only continue in an existing tradition. We shall also strive to attain to satisfactory collaboration in Central Europe, particularly with Austria and Rumania, as soon as these two States have solved their principal international problems.

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I come now to the last section of my speech; the conditions at home and our preparations for the moment when Germany and Hungary will fall.

First of all I should like to emphasise the fact that, although the Czech people during the last war inflicted decisive wounds on Austria-Hungary in the course of its fight against the Allies, they were then never so united or offered such effective mass resistance as now in the present war from the first moment when it broke out. The fact that our people had twenty years of freedom behind them is here of the first importance. And if in the first war their resistance was primarily passive, their resistance at home in the present war was and is extremely active, even though it has up to the present assumed other forms than that manifested in Poland or Yugoslavia or in France.

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From what I have said regarding the spiritual and moral state of our people at home it will be clear why during the past year there was a certain lull in the revolutionary fight against Germany in the Bohemian lands and why partisan fighting could not until then develop to a higher degree. After the shooting of Reinhard Heydrich the Germans resorted to such a terror as shook, in the literal sense of the term, not only the Czech lands, but the whole of the world's public opinion. This temporary attitude of waiting, particularly on the part of the broad masses of the people, was influenced, not only by the terror, but also by the heavy allied defeats on different fronts. In the same month in which Lidice and Lezaky were obliterated, the British armies were defeated in Libya and Rommel penetrated deeply into Egypt, while at the same time the Germans broke through on the Eastern Front near Izium and the Soviet Armies retreated to the Caucasus and the Volga. Thereby that active resistance which was so promisingly developing on our home front was for a time set back.

But the turn of military events, and in particular the great successes of the Red Army, after the German catastrophe at Stalingrad, produced a complete change in the morale of our people and stimulated active resistance once more; sabotage began again in the Czech lands, and increased notably in Slovakia when compared with former years. The organisation of underground resistance progressed also, as did the inflicting of injuries on the enemy in the most diverse situations. This has been recently confirmed in a particularly characteristic manner by the justifications given for the sen-

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tences passed upon our patriots by the Nazi courts.

We should judge our conditions wrongly if we did not realise that this situation, together with the impending second front and the approach of the Red Army to our frontiers, is creating all the psychological, political and moral conditions for the transformation of the spiritual and physical resistance of our people—which has been temporarily curbed by the general conditions prevailing and by the remoteness of the Allies' fronts—into a general, determined, uncompromising and militarily effective revolt against the oppressors, of the same type as that which is developing in Yugoslavia, Poland, France and Norway, a revolt which will and must take place in our country too. *I myself, our Government, State Council, Army and our whole State organisation, that is, all of us abroad, are exerting all our strength and using all means to develop this struggle with the help of the Allies. And in this speech I emphatically call upon our people on our territory to join in this. . . .*

The prerequisites for a united national struggle, a great popular revolutionary war, are present throughout Czechoslovak territory. The moment is approaching when our national struggle in the entire homeland, as well as abroad, must begin along these lines. *The creation of a Second Front, the general attack upon Germany from all sides and the approach of the Russians to our frontiers is the rallying call. . . .*

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As to the future course of the war in its last phase, it is going to assume the form of a total European offensive from east and west, north and south, from Italy and from the Balkans, from Rumania, Poland and the Baltic States, from Belgium and Holland, from Norway and France, and from Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Hence we, too, must realise that it would be wrong for our people at home to sit waiting for things to happen. It would be wrong to expect, for instance, that a move will be made first from one side and then from the other, and that there will be a final collapse *everywhere in many places at once without a struggle*. It would be false to assume that there will be a complete breakdown at one single and essential point, as was the case, for instance, in Bulgaria in 1918. It would be wrong if the people at home, situated as they are at the furthest point inland from the front, were simply to await the end without fighting. This would be a fatal error and would only prolong the war and German tyranny. In the end it might be more costly than the battle itself.

In this war the decisive moment is now approaching when everybody everywhere, without exception, must participate in the struggle. This should be done in every possible way and by every possible means. I say this openly to all our people both here and at home.

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The year 1943 was a very successful one in our work of liberation. Internationally we have attained our ends, or almost achieved them. At home the nation in Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Carpatho-Ruthenia is united, firm and brave, quite ready for a Republican constitution and resolutely prepared for the last decisive phase of the struggle. We know from reports from home that in all the chief political questions, domestic problems included, there will be no great differences between us; in particular, I can now already declare that there will be no differences of opinion—either as regards the future democratic organisation of the Republic or our future social and economic plans and aims, or the relations between Czechs and

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Slovaks, or any other fundamental problem of the future life of the Republic — which might seriously threaten the peaceful and harmonious collaboration of the great majority of our people.

I do not cherish any illusions and I know that conditions will be difficult. The work required will be enormous, the obstacles great and the struggle to get the country purged of Nazis, Fascists and their accomplices, almost superhuman. But remember, all of you, where we were in 1939 and what were our prospects, and consider carefully how our cause stands today and what prospects are now opening before us. Is not all this immensely encouraging, and does it not give us the right to set a high value on the moral and ideal strength and the political and cultural qualities of our people? Does not all this justify us in saying, what I have already repeatedly said myself here and elsewhere, that out of all our sufferings and struggles since 1938 we can derive a new and a great moral strength for the future of our State and for the greatness of our nation, that this very period, once successfully concluded, may be a great and glorious epoch in our stormy history?

Arms for France

by FERNAND GRENIER

(*The speech of the Deputy for St. Denis, during the debate on help to French Resistance, at the Consultative Assembly, in Algiers, January* 8, 1944.)

GENTLEMEN, how to help the Resistance? That is the problem to be solved. The Communist Party delegation proposes a series of practical solutions on this subject.

First, passive resistance must give place on national soil to active combat, for passivity and inaction cost more than struggle. I will give three examples. Those resisting deportation to Germany have joined the free bands or gone into the *maquis*. Those who went had to endure the bombardment of German towns. Last August more than a thousand French workers were killed thus in factory-tombs, or twenty times more than were killed in France in the same period of those who resisted deportation. Also, terrible losses have been recorded by the organisations which restrict themselves to the preparation for the day D and the hour H, losses infinitely heavier than those suffered in spite of their prodigious activity by the organisations of *francs-tireurs*. Finally, in Corsica, the passive resisters had their men deported to Italy, while the illegal struggle cost only twenty-two lives.

Since 1940 great numbers of Frenchmen have died of hunger, of cold, while others have been shot. These losses may be estimated at a million lives. What battle could be more costly than the passive acceptance of slavery? Thus it appears, as General de Gaulle has said, a policy of waiting is worse than a mistake, it is a crime against the fatherland. One of our first duties is to break this policy of waiting. To do this we must raise to a permanent status the actions of struggle, the armed attacks, the demonstrations of housewives against famine, the strikes in the factories.

On this I would say, in parenthesis, the strike for increased wages, the strike for improvement in food, are national gestures, for they slow down production, they paralyse the Nazi war machine. (Applause.)

It is important for the radio broadcasts of Free France from Algiers, Brazzaville and Beirut to speak of the struggles which take place in France, since at Lyons they do not know what the patriots of Lille or Strasburg are doing; the revelation of what these

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men of the North are doing galvanises the boys in the South, and vice versa. Publicity given to actions on the front in France destroys passivity, while silence gives rise to the policy of waiting.

We deplore that the five minutes devoted by the B.B.C. to "Honneur et Patrie" gives only timid news of the army without uniform of the French front. It is useful that news is given in greater abundance about the Soviet, Greek, Yugoslav, etc., patriots, for they are a magnificent example for the other peoples.

Thus Denmark was formerly only interested in milk products; it only occupied itself with the production of butter and cheese. For ten months this country has re-echoed with the noise of explosions in the factories which work for Germany. Strikes alternate with student demonstrations and the judges themselves refuse to condemn the patriots.

There are immense possibilities of fostering everywhere throughout the world, and in particular in France, the great struggle of the peoples for independence. It is possible to give help to the patriots of a technical character. Engineers can indicate the best ways to sabotage Nazi material. They can tell them how to blow up a bridge, how to use chemicals.

We warmly applaud the promise made by the Allies to arm the combatants without uniform; but we regret that the work of these combatants is under-estimated. The effectiveness of the patriots' struggle is certain; but the means of the patriots are limited. In their appeal of August, 1943, the patriots spoke of the lack of explosives, cold steel, food tickets, which hinders their action. On October 7 they indicated that they had nothing but material taken from the enemy, and by reason of lack of explosives they had had to develop a technique of derailment which was more costly in men.

It is not light-heartedly that we give to the public these pressing appeals; but the whole world must know that the patriots would strike harder blows at the oppressor if they had the means.

We must all accomplish our particular effort in this domain. "Help yourself and Heaven will help you," we say sometimes. The army without uniform does not ask for guns or tanks; it needs simply grenades, explosives, sub-machine guns; it must also get shoes, clothing, food. All the material which is indispensable to it for carrying on a good fight can easily be transported by the quick boats and launches, submarines and planes which we have. Thanks to the intelligent use of these means of transport, we can work miracles. There is Corsica to give us an outstanding example.

Some people fear a premature insurrection. I am going to quote on this subject an extract from a letter of August 6 addressed to General de Gaulle which gives the answer to this fear. "A premature movement must not fling the French patriots beneath the fire of the German armoured cars. What seems to us desirable is to draw into the struggle the mass of the young resisters, to destroy the enemy's material, to create a growing feeling of insecurity which will oblige the enemy to maintain large forces in France, to get the French people accustomed to the atmosphere of national insurrection."

I should like to reply to a remark which the Commissaire for the Interior made to me in an earlier debate. He asked me to salute equally all the armed patriots, without making a distinction between the different groups. I salute them willingly. However, I do not believe the unity of the Resistance will be harmed if I say that the *francs-tireurs* have done this, the free bands have done that. On the contrary, I

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think this will inspire them with emulation. We speak of the soldiers of Bir-Hakeim, the soldiers of the Fezzan, the sailors of the "Casabianca," the airmen of the "Normandie" squadron. Does one really split up the Army by mentioning military heroes by name? On the contrary, I see nothing but advantages to be gained from this.

Finally, I will make one last point. Action in France still depends on different organisations. These services are not yet co-ordinated. Their leaders must be persuaded that division serves the enemy and places a weapon in the hands of the boche. We ask for the formation of a single Commissariat which will work in close relations with the combatants. I know that there are great difficulties in the way of regrouping and co-ordinating the efforts. But we are here to help you with all our strength.

The Communist Party counts on the French Committee of National Liberation to set everything going with a view to developing the French Resistance. (Loud applause.)

Speaker's Conference

by E. M. WINTERTON

THERE can be little doubt about the reasons which have made the calling of a Speaker's Conference on electoral reform necessary. Primarily they are the general anticipation that the war in Europe will end in 1944, bringing with it the question of fulfilling the reconstruction promises made during the war; and, connected with this, the general feeling that the present Parliament, elected in the autumn of 1935 and endowed with a heavy Tory majority, is no longer even technically representative of the constituencies.

The formal reason for the Speaker's Conference is the great shifting of population which has taken place since 1939—owing to the expansion of industry, the decentralisation of existing industries, the evacuation of people from vulnerable areas, and the growth of the armed forces. National Registration, at the end of September, 1939, showed that over 2¼ millions of the population left their homes during the first month of the war. A Home Office Committee under the chairmanship of the Registrar-General, Sir Sylvanus Vivian, reported in December, 1942, that by the end of the previous year about five million adults—one-sixth of the electorate—had moved to other areas since the war began, quite apart from those who had joined the armed forces.

This change has had two outstanding consequences. One of them is not commonly mentioned, although it can have immense political influence. By the bringing of millions of people into industry, not only from previously secluded and unorganised occupations as in the last war, but in small country towns and rural areas where war factories have been established, and by transporting great numbers of workers from large towns to these areas, the process has carried out a kind of political equalisation, bringing the country districts politically abreast of the towns, to a degree which has not existed in England since the Industrial Revolution. After the war the tide may roll back, so far as population is concerned, but whether it will do so politically cannot be said thus early.

But there is also the technical side of the question. With the vast movement of population, and under the influence of the electoral truce between the three largest parties, no new registers of voters have been prepared since the summer of 1939. Not only did the five

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million adults above-mentioned lose their votes, but anyone who was under twenty-one at that time is also disfranchised. In November, 1943, Parliament passed an Act ordering the use of identity cards as the basis for preparing voters' lists, with a two months' residence qualification. But the problem of where the voters will be living should the general election come after the war—and consequently of whether the number of voters in each constituency will be greater or less than the figure of 70,000 adopted as the basis for the distribution of seats at the last reapportionment, in 1916—still remains to be settled.

It is obvious that redistribution is necessary. Already in 1939, before war broke out, 119 constituencies required adjustment, according to the Vivian Report: 87 of them because they had fallen far below 70,000 voters, 32 because they were entitled on the same basis to two or more seats in the House of Commons. In 1941, according to statistics which the Report states are incomplete, the number of constituencies requiring adjustment had risen to 164 (128 because they had decreased, 36 because they had increased)—or over one-quarter of all the seats in the House of Commons. But it must be equally obvious that during the war and for some time after there can be no satisfactory re-distribution, since there is no point at which the shifting of population will immediately cease. Actually any partial redistribution would be extremely unfair. The whole question can find no effective solution unless it is taken in conjunction with the question of larger constituencies required by a new and fairer method of voting.

There are other questions of electoral reform which must inevitably be posed at the Speaker's Conference, or in connection with it, if barriers to the free and more accurate expression of the will of the people are to be eliminated.

There are a number of questions concerned with the status of the individual elector. At eighteen the young man or woman is judged fit to be conscripted for National Service, and within a very few months to hold positions of command in battle; while many millions have already been earning their living for years. What valid reason is there for denying them the vote? Again, one of the last relics of the property qualification which existed up to 1918 is the second vote given to the occupiers of business premises. These number 350,000 according to Mr. Herbert Morrison (November 3, 1943); there is no justification for such a plural vote for employers. Thirdly, there are approximately 172,000 voters registered by the Universities (persons holding degrees) who return between them twelve M.Ps. This relic of feudal times does not even provide the results which its defenders advance as a justification—that of introducing into the House of Commons an element of scholarly detachment, of quiet and dispassionate academic thought, unhampered by partisan connections. Fourthly, civil servants, although they have the right to vote, have their freedom limited in every other way, including that of standing as candidates or speaking at election meetings: a gross anomaly affecting many hundreds of thousands of British citizens.

Yet another item in this list is the long overdue reform which would put the local government franchise on the same footing as the Parliamentary franchise, by giving every adult man and woman a vote, in place of the present system of property qualification which dates from the nineteenth century. With the immensely increased proportion of local expenditure that is shouldered by the central government nowadays, there is no more real basis for the argument that only those who pay the rates should elect the municipal authority that will spend them.

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The seriousness of this problem is shown by the estimate (*Daily Telegraph*, July 27, 1943) that the extension of adult suffrage to local government would increase this electorate by 25 per cent.

A second group of questions bears on the machinery of elections themselves, which still presents notable obstacles to the clear expression of the people's will. The £150 deposit required of candidates, ostensibly as a means of protecting the electoral system against "freak" candidates, in reality presses on the working-class candidate most of all, since it is the freaks who as a rule can raise the money from their own pocket. To insist that candidates should be able to show nomination by a substantial number of voters in the constituency rather than a purely nominal figure as at the present time, and to abolish the election deposit altogether, would eliminate the bias against working-class candidates to a considerable extent. Other points of the same kind are a reduction in allowable election expenses: the prohibition of the use of cars by candidates, unless they have been previously registered with the returning officer for general use to bring in to the polls the sick, the infirm, and workers employed a long way away, and have been pooled for equal use by all parties: a widening of facilities for access to voters' registers by candidates, and for distribution of their literature to the electors; and so forth.

But, apart from these relatively technical changes, there arises the wider question of the more accurate reflection of public opinion in Parliament. Quite apart from the deeper limitations of British democracy arising from the class character of existing society, the present electoral system does not even secure representation according to the votes of the electorate. At the last general election in 1935, 11.8 million votes brought the Tory "National" Government 431 seats, while Labour and all other opposition groups had only 184 seats for 10.2 million votes. In each of the seven general elections since 1918, the Tories won more seats in Parliament than their vote in the country as a whole justified. Moreover, in four of these general elections, they actually had a minority of votes, but a majority in the Commons.

The Labour leaders believe that this will not prevent them ultimately obtaining a majority, through what is called "the swing of the pendulum." A well-known Labour Party propagandist, Robert Fraser, declared in his *What's What in Politics* (published in the Labour Book Service) that the Labour Party was quite satisfied with a system which "converts a quite small majority among the electors into a very large majority in the House of Commons." We have just seen, however, that it is a minority among the electors which frequently becomes a Commons majority; moreover, the rank-and-file of the Labour Party are far from showing the complacency of their leaders in this matter, let alone members of other parties.

A more specious argument is that, in Mr. Fraser's words, a Government elected by any other means—that is, without over-representation of one political party—would be "weak and perishable," and thus dangerous for democracy. But it is untrue that the absence of overweighted representation necessarily brings "unstable" governments. In Norway and Sweden, in Denmark and Czechoslovakia, in Holland and Switzerland proportional representation was in force for periods varying from twenty to forty years up to the present war, yet their Governments were never "unstable." The forces which created Hitlerism in Germany were the unbroken Junker and big business class, whom the Allies left armed after the last war in order to

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destroy "Bolshevism" among the rebellious German people: and not the methods of proportional representation. In France, again, there was a single-member system; and it was not the multiplicity of parties that led to the destruction of the Popular Front and the defeat of 1940, but the treachery of the industrial and financial magnates, and of the politicians whom they had corrupted in all parties.

It is desirable to bear these facts in mind, when considering the various proposals for securing better representation which are likely to come before the Speaker's Conference.

Various methods have been proposed and also tried for meeting this. In a number of countries in Europe there is the "list" system. By this the country is divided into large constituencies, with from twenty to sixty members in each, and electors cast their vote for the list of a particular party which they fancy, or if they wish, distribute their votes among the various lists. The elector has as many votes as there are seats allotted to his constituency. All the votes for the various lists are added up, and the seats allotted to the various parties in strict numerical proportion to the number of votes cast. This system ensures that practically every party of any consequence receives some representation, as well as more accurate representation of the others.

Against this system it is urged that the M.P. loses touch with his electors, and that in any case it is totally unsuited to the political structure of Great Britain since the days of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy. *For* the system may be urged that for electors to vote on programmes rather than on persons is an advantage, now that political parties which choose their own candidates have come to stay; and that economic planning on regional lines may bring us back administratively to some larger divisions.

Another system is one that attempts to modify the evil of the single member constituency by making provision (where there are more than two candidates) for either the Second Ballot or the Alternative Vote. In the former case a second ballot is held a week later, in which the bottom man formally or in effect drops out (as in France before the war). In the case of the Alternative Vote the elector numbers the candidates 1, 2, 3, and so on, in order of preference. If no candidate gets an absolute majority, the bottom man is knocked out and his other votes are redistributed in order of preference, and so on, until someone has a majority.

Against this system, in either form, it is usually urged that it leaves untouched the evil of the single-member constituency and that it makes for entirely unprincipled electoral understandings. *For* the system (it was unanimously adopted by a Royal Commission in 1910, adopted by a majority in the Speaker's Conference of 1917, and passed by narrow majorities in the House of Commons in discussing the electoral reforms of 1918: being only thrown out by the House of Lords), it is usually urged that it involves the least departure from the traditional British constituency system.

A third method, involving in reality a compromise between the two, is that of the Single Transferable Vote (the form of Proportional Representation most widely advocated in this country) in which the constituencies are grouped so as to have three to five seats, and the electors mark their preferences in order on the ballot paper. The quota of first preferences needed for election is obtained by dividing the number of seats into the total votes cast. Whichever candidate has the quota of first preferences, or more, is declared elected. If he has a surplus, his second preferences are counted, and distributed among the other can-

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didates in proportion to his surplus: i.e., if the quota is 10,000, and his surplus is 2,000, then each of the remaining candidates gets one-fifth of whatever second preferences have been recorded for him on the successful man's papers. Usually a second man will be elected in this way. Then the man at the bottom of the list will be eliminated and *his* second preferences distributed: and so on, until all the seats have been filled.

This third system is the most practical immediate proposal in relation to conditions in Britain, for ensuring democratic representation in Parliament corresponding to the wishes of the electorate. It would provide the most favourable conditions for the return of a stable Labour and progressive majority in Parliament in the next elections and for the establishment of a stable Government upon that basis.

Constitutional changes in the U.S.S.R.

by JAMES FOX

BY two amendments to the 1936 Soviet Constitution of the U.S.S.R., the Supreme Soviet on February 1, 1944, granted to the sixteen main constituent Republics (the Union Republics) of the U.S.S.R. the right to form military formations, and to enter into direct relations with foreign states and to conclude agreements with them. To the citizens of a country which refused to grant home rule to Ireland while fighting one war, and is refusing even Dominion status to India while fighting another, these may seem remarkable enough concessions. To Soviet citizens they are logical developments of the policy of a socialist state which included in its first constitution the right of its members to secede, and which, in less than a quarter of a century, has turned the tsarist "prison house of nations" into a brotherhood of peoples.

The necessary amendments to the Constitution to give effect to the new rights were moved by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, V. M. Molotov. He said that the change was only possible because of the political, economic and cultural growth of the Republics on which the new powers were being conferred, and because of the strength of the Soviet Union as a whole. It was a great sign of confidence to initiate these changes in the midst of war, when "the forces of our people are so greatly strained and when not every State would venture to undertake such important transformations."

On the question of allowing the Union Republics their own foreign representation, Comrade Molotov recalled that before the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was constituted in 1923, certain of the republics which formed it (R.S.F.S.R., Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaidjan) had previously had separate representation, and that at the time when their powers were consolidated into one People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Stalin said: "I do not preclude the possibility that subsequently we may have to separate certain Commissariats which we are now merging in the Union of Republics." In the years of war the international connections of the Soviet Union have risen to a higher level, continued Molotov. The foundation for the co-operation of the large and small democratic countries was laid at Moscow and Teheran. Since the Union Republics have a number of specific economic and cultural requirements which cannot be covered in full measure by All-Union representation,

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the new step is in the interests not only of them, but also of the general strengthening of Soviet co-operation with other States. Molotov quoted speeches by Marshal Stalin on two important occasions—the 1936 Constitution, and the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Revolution, in 1943—where he instanced the national policy of the U.S.S.R. as one of its greatest successes, and closed by calling this further extension of rights to free national development an important blow to Fascism, which must be defeated not only in the military, but also in the moral and political field.

The legal change in the Constitution necessary to give effect to the above decisions is the transformation of the People's Commissariats for Defence and for Foreign Affairs from All-Union into Union-Republican Commissariats. The U.S.S.R. is a federal state, consisting now of sixteen Union Republics, which carry out all functions of government not reserved to the central government. Article 14 of the 1936 Constitution lists twenty-three subjects, such as foreign affairs, defence, foreign trade, planning of national economy, and other economic and legal functions, which are reserved to the central government. Article 15 states "the sovereignty of the Union Republics is restricted only within the limits set forth in Article 14." The link with the central government is maintained in various ways:—

(*a*) Certain subjects, such as foreign trade, railways and other communications, heavy industry in its various branches, come under All - Union People's Commissariats, situated in Moscow and dealing with the whole country. (*b*) Certain other subjects, such as agriculture, light industry, finance, public health, justice, are governed by Union-Republican Commissariats, also situated in Moscow, but exercising their powers through Union-Republican People's Commissariats of the same name functioning in the sixteen Republics. These last are each responsible to its own Republican government and also linked to the Union-Republican People's Commissariat in Moscow, which is thus able to co-ordinate their activities.

The constitutional amendments of February, 1944, transform the People's Commissariats of Defence and of Foreign Affairs from All-Union (class (*a*)) to Union-Republican (class (*b*)) People's Commissariats. That is to say, there will be a Union-Republican People's Commissariat of Defence in Moscow charged with "the establishment of the directing principles of the organisation of military formations of the Union Republics," and sixteen Union-Republican People's Commissariats of Defence in Kiev, Tbilisi, Erivan, etc., and also working with the Union-Republican People's Commissariat of Defence in Moscow. Similarly, the Union-Republican People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Moscow is charged with "the establishment of the general character of relations between the Union Republics and foreign states," and is linked with the Republican governments in the same way.

The full meaning of this interaction between All-Union and Republican organs of government can only be understood when it is realised that the Constitution of the Soviet Union differs from that of Britain in an important respect; whereas in Britain local authorities, from the largest County Council to the smallest Parish Council, can only engage in activities which are specifically enjoined upon or permitted to them by statute, in the constitutions of the U.S.S.R. and of the Union Republics certain powers only are reserved for the higher organs of government, and any not so reserved are within the competence of the lower organs.

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The devolution of further powers from the All-Union to the Union-Republican governments is thus fully within the tradition of Soviet government, which is based on the policy of "activisation"—that is, of drawing in and giving as much responsibility as possible to every citizen of the U.S.S.R. On the economic side, it has been possible to give more and more financial autonomy to local authorities because the backward areas, the old tsarist "colonies," have been levelled up by the initial policy of special assistance from federal funds; the Five Year Plans have spread industrialisation to some of the remotest parts of the country. It has now become possible for Union-Republican and local authorities to rely more and more on resources accumulated within their own borders. Through a policy of regionalisation agriculture is largely in the hands of local authorities in its administrative and financial aspects. It is incorrect to picture the U.S.S.R. as subject to rigid centralised control, though naturally, since the U.S.S.R. is a socialist country, the existence of planning and absence of conflicts of interests will lead to a general harmony and uniformity of policy.

The socialist nature of the Soviet system is often forgotten by foreign commentators, and though the reactions of the British press to the constitutional changes were almost uniformly favourable, some misconceptions crept in because this socialist character was ignored. For instance, the *News-Chronicle* (February 3, 1944) welcomed the "wider development of economic, social and cultural individualities in the Union Republics," and greeted the "new policy" as "the outcome of immense confidence on the part of Russia's rulers." *The Times* (February 4, 1944) also referred to "a fresh sign of confidence in the loyalty and the development of the non-Russian republics." The *Manchester Guardian* complimented "the leader of the Russian Revolution, who has done for Russia what Augustus did for the Roman world when it had been brought to the verge of ruin by the civil wars." All, however, expressed a certain amount of uneasiness about the external effects of the change, though not all were as crude as the *Financial News*, which feared that the granting of "Dominion status" (*sic*) "might be interpreted as indicating a desire for further Dominions." Reports received in this country from the American press concentrate on the external effects—though the ignoring of the internal significance of the changes is strange from a country which is so insistent on "states' rights" that Congress hesitates to infringe them by allowing soldiers to vote. The New York correspondent of the *Daily Express* (February 3, 1944) remarks: "At the worst it is interpreted as power politics, with the eventual purpose of absorbing the reconquered countries into a Soviet Empire." The wilful inaccuracy of attributing imperialist motives to a socialist country is only paralleled by the delightful *naivete* of Mr. Walter Lippmann, who, writing in the *Sunday Times* of February 6, 1944, welcomed the decentralisation of the U.S.S.R. into a "federation of national republics," because it would then be "a more complex, and therefore a more cumbersome, and therefore a more comfortable political system to deal with." A companion picture to Mr. Lippmann's dream of the Union Republics' policy shooting off at such tangents that "Marsal Stalin's . . . political power will be diluted, because of the need to consult," is given by "A Student of Russia" in the *Manchester Evening News* of February 7, 1944; he weeps crocodile tears because "it is unthinkable that Soviet Georgia, for instance, should be able to imitate Eire and refuse to enter the war together with the rest of Russia."

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"A Student of Russia" appears to be so little a student of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that he is unable to draw the lesson from Soviet policy towards the nationalities: a Socialist government would consider it had failed in its duty if an important constituent republic was unwilling to come in on the side of justice.

But, after all, the main question is, not what foreign dollar-a-liners think of Soviet policy, but what is the view of those most closely concerned, the Soviet people. Lacis, Deputy of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic, told the Supreme Soviet how at the request of Latvian patriots a Latvian Infantry Division was formed in August, 1941. The value of foreign representation is shown, continued Lacis, by the need to deal with people like Bilmanis, former Latvian Minister in U.S.A., who "abuses the hospitality of the great Trans-Atlantic power" by extolling the Latvian quisling General Dankers. A Ukrainian Deputy, Grechuka, President of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine, said that the Ukraine's "geographical situation and, above all, its economic importance, makes constant attention and extreme vigilance necessary, not only as regards its immediate neighbours, but also certain states much further away, whose wolfish appetites have always been whetted, and will be whetted again, at the sight of the Soviet Ukraine." Paleckis, Deputy of the Lithuanian S.S.R., summed up the Soviet attitude in a sentence: "We people of the young Soviet Republics are in a better position than anyone else to appraise the genuine independence which every Republic of the Soviet Union enjoys."

Town Planning

by Dr. H. S. PHILLIPS

THE apparent opposition between town and country has always interested students of urban planning. It is more than ever important today to realise that the more the "town" is socially and scientifically urbanised, and the more the "country" is properly developed agriculturally, by so much the more will the two tend to become unified.

Town and country will become more unified, not by artificial attempts to "ruralise" towns or to "industrialise" villages, but precisely by their own evolution to a higher stage of development. This evolution cannot be completed within an urban and rural economic structure founded on the continuation of unbridled private enterprise and ownership. Private land ownership makes the planned social development of the modern town virtually impossible due to legal and compensation problems. The private ownership of both land and factories cramps agricultural potentialities and leads to slum-ridden, unplanned and ever-growing urban masses.

In appreciating the comparatively scientific conclusions which are drawn in the recent (Abercrombie) L.C.C. plan, the above observations need to be remembered. Professor Abercrombie appears to be an exponent of what, in technical language, can aptly be called "sub-centralisation,"—that is, the re-development of new planned centres of activity *within* the present built-up area. This policy stands out in opposition to "de-centralisation" as* this concept has come to be linked with "dispersal," which implies development away from or *outside* the pre-

* This terminology can be so confusing that I prefer to treat de-centralisation as dispersal throughout. It should be pointed out, however, that the Barlow Report and Abercrombie would refer to the L.C.C. plan as de-centralisation *as opposed* to dispersal.

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sent built-up area. This policy is also in opposition to "centralisation,"—which is the natural trend of unchecked capitalist development. This trend is one of increasing domination by the capital city and of development *into* the built-up area. The modern political and social setting of these trends of thought and action merit consideration.

"Dispersal" sums up the objects of the "Garden City" enthusiasts and the "back to the country" themists—who are largely centred about the Town and Country Planning Association. Owing to much that is good in their propaganda, and the obvious need for *some* new planned towns, after the Soviet model, but only in *some* places (we have no Siberia), this approach attracts undue popular attention. This interest is also due to the common loathing of slums and of what so-called "housing reform" has managed to produce in the large towns. *It is also due to the fallacious idea that the large town cannot be made a perfectly healthy and uncongested place in a planned system.* Finally, it can be described as due to a failure on the part of theorists to face up to the very *real benefits* of urban concentration, industrially and municipally.

This dispersal policy goes contrary to three progressive necessities in a planned Britain. First, there is the need for larger scale mechanised agriculture, which means an end to sporadic growth in the country and calls for a concentration of small villages into unified and larger market towns. Secondly, there is the simple fact that any "cottage" re-housing scheme, on the periphery of large towns such as London, would inevitably use up the best market-garden and pasture land available. There is certainly no surplus of milk in Britain, and we certainly need to plan for more fresh food in the towns. Thirdly, the great technical and municipal advantages of the larger urban units, in providing economies of municipal services, housing development, sewerage, transport and industrial location economies, are firmly established. These benefits would become the more marked as we planned our large cities instead of leaving them in a congested condition.

The American Resources Committee in summing up against the dispersal idea says: "wholesale de-centralisation is not compatible with the effective performance of urban and national life." We certainly do not want to go back to the land if that means that we lose the land! Rather do we want to save the land, to mechanise agriculture, to reduce the necessity for much agricultural labour, to increase the amount of uncultivated open space and of forest land and to make these available to, as well as easily accessible to, the town dweller.

The "centralisers" are, of course, a far more dangerous and less muddled school of thought. Their planning, if any, would be monopoly planning. Publicly, they disdain all popular planning as "interfering with liberty." They mean by this "their" liberty, to draw slum rents, to place factories in anyone's way—to clutter up the roads. They value "their" liberty to buy land whose value is rising due to the actions of other people or of municipalities. They wish to demand "their" price as "fair" compensation. The *people's liberty*, liberty to live decently, is not their concern.

They go to the opposite extreme from the school of dispersalists. They would build, not cottages, nor even decent noise-proof pre-fabricated flats, like those the Socialists built in Vienna, but street upon street of badly pre-fabricated biscuit boxes. The space they could save by building upwards would not, as in Stockholm or Moscow or the L.C.C. plan, be used for public parks, but rather for factories or

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still more dwellings. On the other hand, this school might build cheap houses on cheap land on never-ending roads in ever-spreading towns, because larger towns mean larger central values. This centralising class would forget our agriculture, ruin our health and crowd us ever more densely into profit-producing trains and buses. Building magnates with such intentions have already caused a somewhat defeatist fear of pre-fabrication amongst leading building trade unionists. If these trade unionists would appreciate what the workers could do with pre-fabrication, their attitude would be less narrow.

Neighbourhood units, factory estates, shopping centres and internal city parks—these are some concrete aspects of a real solution and a sub-centralisation policy. The approach of the L.C.C. plan to these concepts is a practical one. The object is to create real new community areas, instead of being satisfied with producing dormitories and shelters for the people as quickly as possible. This is the scientific planner's plea—to utilise the tremendous potentialities of modern constructional engineering to provide well - built flat - structures in good amenity areas. Instead of escaping from the compensation problem and building on cheap land, without even considering the worker, it is assumed that vested interests will not be permitted to strangle urban planning. Here the valuable land can be saved by building up and creating open spaces. Here the worker needs to live if he is to be close to his work and his social life and if he is not to be *divorced from his own city*.

The wholehearted *attack on congestion* in this plan is fundamentally and socially desirable. Congestion, it shows, *can be faced up to and solved*. To talk about "cottages and gardens" is only to escape from it, for the congested areas of London would fill fifty garden cities. The need to make full use of the unrivalled amenities London possesses, to develop her invaluable capital resources in the interests of social life is seen clearly. Congestion, in terms of small "sweat-shop" factories, can be remedied by municipal factory estates and flatted factories with floors on lease; congestion, in terms of slums, by good flats and housing estates. Congestion in terms of lack of open space can be remedied by the land saved in having planned areas for shops and offices and roads. Congestion on road and rail can be eliminated only by eliminating unnecessary travel, that is, by placing workers nearer their work, by providing specific direct routes for through traffic and by developing the underground tubes in the case of London.

The L.C.C. plan, perhaps, pays too little attention to the political preconditions for the carrying out of its suggestions. Such conditions will have to be fought for and won. It will, of course, be *impossible to plan one town without also planning the whole country*. Other towns must be made attractive to industry, or London will continue to grow. Good plans, or intentions, moreover, will lead nowhere without the rearrangement of local government areas, land acquisition by the nation and long-term planning. The question is going to be: do we leave planning to the insurance companies, building societies, the Church, transport authorities and private owners of property? Or do we see to it that a democratic government plans for the people?

Democrats must clearly be on their guard against big-talk about what can be done about housing and planning, when this *talk ignores the political background of planning*. The main features of the political background to planning can be summed up in the questions of land ownership and compensation, local government powers

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and industrial location-cum-ownership problems, together with national powers of co-ordination and planning.

Without great powers of land acquisition there can be no planning. Yet, with half-hearted acquisition of land and a *bad compensation basis*, the transfer of land ownership may prove the speculators' paradise! Without the *public ownership* of the *means of transport* and certain key industries by co-operatives or the State, real planning for industry will be a very clownish sort of thing, leading to terrible crises.

Unless there is a creation of Regional Councils and a reform of the rating system, with an end to the regressive rates ruling in most towns, there will be no effective planning. The growth of municipal control of housing development and food supply will also be important. All this has to be said without any mention of the fact that whilst the capitalist system remains intact, the *political opposition* to all these measures will be very powerful. This means that there will be fights for planning far more severe than those over the Second Front, Pensions or Social Security. Progressive citizens obviously need to arm themselves with a full understanding.

Finally, we must see that the fundamental background to all the technical aspects of planning and housing are concerned with two things—the location and existence of post war industry as a whole and the nature of the housing programme and building industry. Modern factory estates with amenities for the workers, modern flat-blocks, and so on, necessitate a standardisation of building methods and a large-scale programme of flat building. In this country it will mean an *end to the cement monopoly* and the development of the *glass and plastics* industries. The people will have to step in to prevent the monopoly steel and chemical interests from retarding the development of these materials, or in any way obtaining a control over them.

Given an understanding of these matters, it is up to democrats to put their energies into the adoption of some such progressive plan as that typified by the (Abercrombie) L.C.C. plan. The winning of the war and the destruction of Fascism is the first necessity, but there will be no "homes" to follow unless the planning consciousness of the people is transformed into political consciousness.

Conservatives and Industry

by MAURICE DOBB

THIS is a dull report* if one looks to it for a coherent policy for the post-war world; its vision crabbed, its thinking stale. Of positive proposals it contains remarkably few, and such as it does are drearily vague. Its economics are commonplace and have a musty flavour of pre-1914 text-books. For realism it substitutes a cloud-cuckoo-land of enterprising capitalists (whom it prefers to refer to as "the man-in-the-street") straining at the leash to risk their fortunes in brave adventures for the good of us all. (We are even assured, in Samuel Smiles vein, that modern industry "offers full scope for the boy who comes from the bottom to advance right to the top on his own merits"). But if we look to it as a document which between the lines discloses the attitude of dominant circles in and behind the Conservative Party machine, then it is greatly revealing and well worthy of attention. It then becomes of interest because it shows us precisely the limits within

**Work : the future of British Industry:* a Report by the Conservative Sub-Committee on Industry (January, 1944, 6*d*).

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which such circles intend to compress —one might say crush—any ambitious proposals for economic and social reconstruction after the war. We get a picture of how much new we are going to be allowed to have in the New Britain if big business circles have their way. Here the very evasions of this pedestrian document are revealing, and the very commonplaces which serve to skip round awkward questions or to avoid blurting out what reactionaries really mean.

Let us take as touchstones the two central problems of Monopoly and Unemployment, which most other post-war policy-makers like the Nuffield College Committee or the Unilever document have put in the forefront of the picture. In both cases we meet here an evasion of the real issue: evasion so patent as to escape being ingenious. Monopoly is hardly recognised as a problem at all. In fact, an extension of Cartels, especially international cartels, is advocated; we are told that we should not be misled into thinking that all monopolies are bad; and against any bad behaviour in which they may indulge we are offered the safeguard of "enquiry and publicity." Apart from a few pious phrases about the State intervening if cartels should chance to abuse their powers, there are no proposals at all for controlling monopoly and countering their restrictive and predatory tendencies. We are simply offered the old policy which flourished in the 1930s of State-tolerated and State-buttressed monopoly, christened with the euphemistic title of "self-government of industry," which can serve as the passport of every type of monopolistic depravity.

On unemployment our authors cannot afford to be quite so complacent, since this question will be on the lips of every voter and has long been the burning topic of every army current affairs discussion group. We are told that the committee was "united in the conviction that unemployment such as darkened much of the world between the two wars must not recur"; and that "in the forefront we put the aim of full employment." But it turns out that this aim is not to be placed so unreservedly in the forefront as to endanger the supremacy of private enterprise by any considerable enlargement of State activity. Government investment to combat unemployment, about which there has been so much talk in other reports and memoranda, is dismissed with the chilly phrase: "we are sceptical about the wisdom of relying heavily on public works." Such measures are grudgingly admitted as "a second string" and "as a buffer against depression, not a cure for it." Their scope is to be straitly confined by the proviso that a balanced budget must be achieved "as soon as is reasonably possible after the war." "Unorthodox" schemes of finance (e.g., financing such schemes by bank-credits) are frowned out of court: "indefinitely continued deficits" are condemned as harmful to the nation's credit. Above all, there must be no truck with the view that the "public works solution" should be supplemented by "the State or other public authorities taking over a number of large industries or transport services—or indeed the whole of private industry—in order to be able to control the rate of capital expenditure over a much wider field than at present." Dangerous vistas such as these must be shunned—vistas which open inevitably as soon as one begins to hint that, if private capitalism cannot provide employment, then planned communal action can and must.

The only Government measures which are acceptable are those which "cause *private* capital expenditure at a high level"—namely, cheap and plentiful credit (this is apparently permissible if it is granted to capitalist indus-

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try and not to finance State activity), State-guaranteed loans, generous depreciation allowances for capital in tax-assessments, and above all political and economic security (to be interpreted presumably as the avoidance of any slur of flirtation with anti-capitalist policies). That musty textbook flavour appears when the problem is referred to as consisting in "cyclical unemployment" and "structural unemployment," without any hint of what Sir William Beveridge has called "mass unemployment"—unemployment as a chronic disease of capitalism, and showing itself in a substantial reserve even in boom years (the boom which Lord Woolton seems more concerned to prevent after the war than he is to prevent the slump). To the measures designed to stimulate private capital expenditure there is added the curious proposal that the Government should finance "bulk purchase of universally desired household goods" to maintain the prosperity of consumer goods industries in times of depression. It is not made clear whether the Government is to store the goods so purchased and unload them on the market when better times have come again or to give them away or to dump them in the sea. Nor are we told, of course, that it would be much simpler (and in the last analysis essential—unless it is proposed to burn the goods or give them away) to redistribute incomes so that the mass of the population could have the means to purchase these "universally desirable household goods."

Regarding the transition from war to peace, the report does not, like the crude individualists, shout for the immediate scrapping of the controls. These, it admits, "may be necessary during a transition period for organising the vast structural reversion from war to peace." Nevertheless, their days are to be strictly numbered: "as soon as these special conditions disappear, the case for Government control dwindles," and they should be scrapped as tending to thwart the initiative of those "men of individuality coming from every class of society" on which capitalist industry has been built and to retard "the speed of industry to adjust itself to consumers' needs." An exception is made of Government control of the location of industry in the spirit of the Barlow & Scott Reports; and what is called "the principle inherent in Joint Production Committees" as well as the Guaranteed Working Week, are singled out for a place in this brave new world. There is some talk about the need for "smooth and co-operative human relations" in industry, with more stress on the "human side," and emphasis on the importance of research and education. On the other hand, the Essential Works Order must go, since it "conflicts with the Conservative ideal of personal liberty," as does any limitation on a worker's right to refrain from joining a Trade Union.

This self-confessed "statement of lasting principles and salient facts concerning twentieth century industry" ends on a note of paean to private enterprise and the private capitalist. "It was private enterprise that designed and built the Spitfire and the Lancaster." (If the argument is at this level, of course, there is the easy retort that private enterprise built the slums and Socialism built the Stormovik). We should speak, not of the "profit motive," but of the "profit criterion," since "the system does not breed in this country an unprincipled desire for gain." What is needed to make us all prosperous and happy is that industry shall be "able to rely on Government departments understanding its problems, recognising the harm which arbitrary State action can do." What is needed (presumably to unleash the "vigour and vitality" of "the man in the street") is "dynamic co-operation

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between industry based on private enterprise and Government departments," instead of the "narrowly regulative, restrictive, negative" attitude of Government towards industry before the war. If the attitude of Government toward industry in the Chamberlain epoch is written down as "restrictive and negative," what a world of bigger and bolder State-aided monopolies we have to look forward to in this new epoch of positive "dynamic co-operation" between the State and capitalism after the war! An inspiration to our men in the landing-barges and on the beaches indeed!

Book Review

Science in the U.S.S.R.

Russia's Secret Weapon by Dyson Carter, with foreword by the Dean of Canterbury (Major A. S. Hooper, 2*s*, 102 pp.).

IN 102 pages the author has managed to assemble an astonishing amount of information, which even his rambling style cannot prevent us from absorbing with the greatest interest. In a word, the "secret weapon" is SCIENCE, and for those who are in close touch with the progress of science in Great Britain and the U.S.A., this book does not provide entirely new and unexpected revelations; but what is more important, it makes you think, compare, and regard science from an entirely new angle.

"What he (Lenin) planned was to take science out of the hands of the few and make it understandable and useful to millions of people" (p. 22). In reading this book one realises that this aim has been achieved and the most amazing results obtained. The author describes the work of Yefremov (agriculture), Stakhanov (mining), Kapitza (chemistry); the underground gasification of coal (proposed in England by Professor Ramsay and forgotten); a cathode ray robot operating hundreds of lathes and turning out ammunition day and night without fatigue or mistakes; the marvellously successful experiments in blood transfusion—and shows how all these wonderful inventions were made by the people, for the people. By the people, because in the U.S.S.R. even the type of scientists has changed from aloof beings to workers whose sole aim is to use science to better the world, to keep it in contact with the masses, and to strive after simplicity rather than complication. In this task they are supported, not by the meagre subscriptions of industrial magnates, interested only in their own profits, but by the wealth of the entire nation.

N. N.

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